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black-type headings, outlines of chapters, and references to specific pages in many easily obtained books on reading and studying. The volume should prove useful not only to practical teachers but also to all who are interested in the general problem of analyzing the complex techniques involved in skilful silent reading and studying.

S. C. PARKER

New textbook in play activities.—In dealing with the play activities of children educators may attempt either to adjust children to the existing environment with whatever play opportunities it offers or to create a different “planned environment” which will be more stimulating to those play tendencies which are desirable. This second method of attacking the problem is developed and supported with many concrete illustrations in a recent book¹ by Alice Corbin Sies.

The nature of the author’s purpose is aptly stated by Dr. George E. Johnson in a paragraph in the Preface:

She planned an environment adapted to stimulate the play tendencies of children toward right responses. The original nature of children is conceived by the author not as antagonistic to but as favorable for the development of those qualities, physical, mental, and moral, which we desire for mankind generally. Human nature as exhibited in children has nothing that is not available for the good life, if only the sequence of conduct be started in the right direction—it has no quality we can afford entirely to lose. But it is in the wisely planned environment alone that human nature and the good life are wholly consistent [p. vii].

The content of the book is presented in four main divisions. In Part I the author lays the foundation for the following chapters by attempting to discriminate clearly between play and work experiences. She rejects the proposal that play can be explained as the result of any single instinct, such as hunting or fighting, and maintains that many kinds of instinctive tendencies are involved. She finds the distinction between work and play not in the origin or result but in the movement of the activity itself.

When the activity as a whole is smooth-running and is not interrupted by breaks essential for progress, we have an activity that is essentially playful. On the other hand when the activity as a whole is frequently impeded by checks representing problems to be bridged over we have an activity that is essentially work [p. 23].

Part II is devoted to a description and explanation of dramatic plays. A number of different kinds of dramatic plays are discussed in considerable detail, with a wealth of illustrative examples selected from actual play experiences.

Part III is concerned with “Movement Plays of Children.” After a thoughtful discussion of the significance of motor activities the author presents a number of chapters which deal specifically with the various kinds of plays

¹ ALICE CORBIN SIES, *Spontaneous and Supervised Play in Childhood*. New York: Macmillan Co., 1922. Pp. xii+442.

which involve bodily movement. Here again there is much concrete illustrative material.

In Part IV there are but two chapters, one of which is entitled "Visual Exploration"; the other, "Experimentation with Sound."

Throughout the text the author takes a biological attitude toward play, treating the subject in a thoroughly scientific manner. The book is sound in theory and is a genuine contribution to the philosophy of play. More than that, it is an extremely practical discussion of a proposal which, if widely adopted, would do much to produce a superior type of play by providing a more stimulating environment. The book will be of particular interest to kindergarten and primary teachers and to classes in education where the topic of play is considered.

G. T. B.

The growth of reading ability.—The complexity of the reading process presents a constant challenge to the educator. A recent monograph¹ of the University of Chicago series gives clear and practical help in defining certain of the problems involved and in suggesting means for their solution.

An appropriation from the Commonwealth Fund made possible the examination of the eye-movements during reading of 186 subjects, these being selected from all of the elementary and high-school grades and including an adult college group. Comparative data were thus secured for plotting growth curves as to the average number of fixations per line, average duration of fixations, and average number of regressive movements per line. These curves are tested by results secured from the use of standard tests.

The author takes the broad view that while all fundamental reading habits must be developed in arriving at maturity in reading, no method is to be condemned because it does not secure such development at any given time. The psychologist is said to be interested in all methods which secure results, though the practical teacher must choose the method which secures most economically those habits which are fundamental for her grade.

The detailed study given of first-grade cases is unusually helpful. Sufficient data showing tangible results have been hard to secure by other means. Yet intelligent study of the beginner is essential if economical methods of teaching are to be evolved. In the monograph results are given illustrating two contrasting methods. The differences are said to be immaterial provided the teacher knows how to supplement the training later to make up for deficiencies.

Analysis of specific difficulties is given in a few cases with specific recommendations for overcoming these difficulties. A fruitful field lies here.

The reader is impressed with the scope of the study, the objective quality of the data presented, and the broad view used in interpreting results. Occa-

¹ GUY THOMAS BUSWELL, *Fundamental Reading Habits: A Study of Their Development*. Supplementary Educational Monographs, No. 21. Chicago: Department of Education, University of Chicago, 1922. Pp. xiv+150. \$1.50.